

TO: Child Care Providers

FROM: Peggy M. Ball

DATE: October 24, 2005

RE: Changes to the Star Rated License System

During the 2005 Legislative Session, House Bill 707 was passed which resulted in changes to North Carolina's Star Rated License System. The Division of Child Development would like to take this opportunity to inform you of the changes in the law, and describe how these changes may affect your program. We are excited about this opportunity for changes in the rated license system which we think will result in more accurate reflections of a program's quality.

Compliance History

Prior to the change in legislation, compliance history was one of the three components of a star rated license. The compliance history will now be a minimum requirement for maintaining any license as well as a Notice of Compliance. Any new center or family child care home that opens after January 1, 2006, must maintain a compliance history of at least 75% over the previous 18 months or during the length of time the facility has operated. By January 1, 2008, existing child care facilities must have a compliance history of at least 75% for the previous 18 months or during the length of time the facility has operated in order to maintain a license or Notice of Compliance.

Star Rated License System

Star Ratings of Two to Five Stars will be based only on program standards and staff education rather than the current three components of program standards, staff education and compliance history. Existing child care programs will have until January 1, 2008, to be assessed under the revised two component system. Any new child care facility that opens after January 1, 2006, will be assessed under a revised two component system.

Why are changes being made?

1. The new standards are intended to make the Star Rated License System a more accurate reflection of the quality of child care programs.
2. Research has demonstrated that higher points in Program Standards and Staff Education are more closely linked to quality care and strong outcomes for children.
3. Child care programs with higher points in Program Standards and Staff Education components have less substantiations of child abuse or neglect.

Rule Change Information

To assist you with reviewing the proposed rules, we have included the following information in this mailing:

1. Changes Affecting Programs & Summary of Proposed Rule Changes

2. Chart of the Proposed Rule Text
3. Important Dates for Proposed Rated License Rules

Based on the changes in the law, the NC Child Care Commission has proposed text for rules for a two component rated license system. The proposed rules were published in the NC Register on October 3, 2005. To access a full copy of the proposed rule text, visit the Division's web site at www.ncchildcare.net and click on the "*Revised Rated License*" tab located on the left-hand side of the homepage. Along with the proposed rule text, a written comment form that may be submitted electronically is also available on the Division's web site.

A public hearing will be held on November 10, 2005, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in the Auditorium at the Archives and History/State Library Building located at 109 East Jones Street, Raleigh, NC. Written comments may be submitted through December 2, 2005, to Dedra Alston, Rulemaking Coordinator, NC Division of Child Development, 2201 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-2201, or by e-mail Dedra.Alston@ncmail.net.

Rated License Transition Grants

As North Carolina transitions to a revised star rated license system by 2008, Rated License Transition Grants will be offered to financially assist child care providers. The grants will provide resources to help child care providers maintain or improve the overall care provided and help ease the transition to the two component star rated license system. Information on the application process will be mailed out to all providers in December.

House Bill 661

In other legislative news, House Bill 661 became effective October 1, 2005. This Bill authorizes the Department of Health and Human Services to establish a central registry that maintains a list of individuals responsible for abuse or serious neglect of a juvenile. The Social Services Commission must create and propose rules for the Responsible Individuals List. At the earliest, these rules will become effective May 1, 2006. To view HB 661 visit the NC General Assembly's web site at www.ncleg.net. Upcoming information on the rulemaking process will be posted on our web site.

The Division will continue to keep you informed about the status of the rule changes. Our web site is an excellent source of information and will be updated to reflect any changes that occur. Please feel free to call your child care consultant or the Division at 919-662-4499 or 1-800-859-0829 (in-state call only) if you have questions or concerns.

Attachments

PMB/LAP

cc: Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies
Division of Social Services Child Care Coordinators
NC Child Care Commission Members
NC Community College System
NC Smart Start Partnerships
More At Four State Office
Division of Child Development Staff